

COMMENT ON THE PROPOSED CONSERVATION OR SUPPRESSION OF
PAPIO MÜLLER, 1773 AND ON THE PROPOSED SUPPRESSION OF
PAPIO BRISSON, 1762. Z.N.(S.) 2093.
(see vol. 33: 46-60, 148-150)

(1) By Peter Grubb (*Department of Zoology, University of Ghana,
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In their recent submission to the International Commission, Delson and Napier (1976) each take different stands on whether or not we should continue to use *Papio* auctorum as the generic name for savanna baboons. Delson opts for priority over stability by proposing the conservation of *Papio* Müller, 1773, with the mandrill as genotype. But beyond noting that this calls for fewer rulings from the Commission, he does not present grounds for this view nor for his opinion that the present case fails to qualify as an extreme one. Napier, on the other hand, cites evidence to show why the abandonment of *Papio* for savanna baboons would lead to considerable confusion, and this evidence cannot be ignored. Apparently other authors with one exception have avoided the problem, either by implicitly ignoring *Papio* Müller, or by employing a taxonomic 'escape route', placing drill-mandrills together with savanna baboons in one genus. It may be helpful in evaluating the merits of Delson's and Napier's options to consider their prospects under different taxonomic treatments.

If *Papio*, *Mandrillus* and *Chaeropithecus* are regarded as fully synonymous, then the prior generic name in either Alternative A (Delson) or Alternative B (Napier) will be *Papio*, and the authorship, date and genotype may be adequately settled by Alternative A. But this is a totally hypothetical position. There can be no assurance that the consensus is going to accept such a taxonomic arrangement in the future, and further research is almost certainly required before the phylogenetic relationships and phenetic differences of drill-mandrills and baboons can be securely established. Furthermore, it is important that strictly nomenclatural matters should not appear to exert a constraint on purely taxonomic decisions. This may already have occurred: those anxious to retain priority but perhaps unwilling to adopt the use of *Chaeropithecus* (as in Alternative A), may have been swayed by a nomenclatural problem in reducing the savanna baboons to subgeneric rank (see Delson and Napier, 1976: para. 11) even though the congeneric versus separate generic status of drill-mandrills and savanna baboons had not been very thoroughly debated.

If the genera of drill-mandrills and of savanna baboons are not regarded as synonymous but are to remain valid genera, Alternative A will not only require the use of the relatively unfamiliar and apparently unpalatable *Chaeropithecus* for the savanna baboons, but also the transfer in usage of *Papio*, a transfer which is going to cause very great confusion: as Napier points out, an exceptionally wide body of biologists associate the name *Papio* with savanna baboons. The position would be still further aggravated if while *Papio* Müller and *Chaeropithecus* Gervais were employed respectively for

drill-mandrills and savanna baboons, *Chaeropithecus* were to oscillate in the literature between generic and subgeneric status. To many biologists unfamiliar with the niceties of nomenclatural practice, it would appear proper to call baboons *Papio* at one moment, but apparently incorrect the next. It might seem preferable, bearing this ominous prospect in mind, to dispense with *Papio* altogether if we are to adopt Alternative A. This unhappy putative solution (strongly opposed by Delson and Napier, 1976: para. 11) further illuminates the good sense of Napier's Alternative B.

It thus appears that Alternative A presents potential problems while Alternative B is more satisfactory. The nomenclature of the Primates has in the past been bedevilled with uncertainty, and it will not give taxonomists any credit in the eyes of their fellow biologists if they create new uncertainties.

The Preamble to the Code clearly states its objects, and the principle of stability and universality is given first consideration before the device whereby this is *normally* to be maintained - priority - is mentioned. Napier has given sound reasons for believing that stability and universality are threatened by the use of *Papio* Müller instead of *Papio* Erxleben. In these circumstances, it is proper to request the International Commission to waive the strict requirements of priority by upholding Alternative B (as modified in Delson and Napier, 1977). It also seems desirable to support Delson and Napier's (1976) submission relating to *Papio* Brisson, 1792.

(2) Note by the Secretary

The following zoologists have also written to express support for Alternative B:-

Dr. L. Freedman: *The University of Western Australia, Department of Anatomy & Human Biology, Nedlands, W.A. 6009*

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Dr. C.K. Brain: *Transvaal Museum, Paul Kruger Street, P.O. Box 413, Pretoria (South Africa)*

Dr. R.D. Martin; *Secretary, Primate Society of Great Britain.*

Prof. Dr. W.N. Verheyen: *Rijksuniversitair Centrum Antwerpen Leerstoel Voor Algemene Dierkunde, Groenenborgerlaan 171, 2020 Antwerpen, Belgium*

Mrs. G. Stolp Nobile: *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Via delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 - Rome. Italy*

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